Funding will help strengthen the resilience of communities situated on the front lines of a changing climate; tribes encouraged to apply

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For Immediate Release: March 23, 2016
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WASHINGTON — As part of the Obama Administration's effort to prepare communities nationwide for the impacts of a changing climate, acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Lawrence S. Roberts today announced that Indian Affairs will provide nearly $6.5 million to fund tribal projects that promote climate change adaptation and ocean and coastal management planning.

A Notice of Funding Availability is being sent directly to the leaders of federally recognized tribes who are invited to apply online.

"Native communities from Alaska to Florida, Washington to Louisiana and in between are on the front lines of real and serious climate challenges that threaten their livelihood and heritage," said Acting Assistant Secretary Roberts. "The cultural and economic needs of tribes are tied to the land and protecting that land is a critical component of advancing tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This important funding to build on climate adaption plans and resilience measures builds on the down payment we've already issued to support tribal leadership in helping to protect their communities and resources for future generations."

Of the $6.5 million provided by the Tribal Climate Resilience Program, $4 million will be available for Climate Adaptation Planning, $2 million for Ocean/Coastal Management Planning, and at least $500,000 for youth internships and engagement.

Tribal climate resilience funds build on nearly $20 million the Obama Administration has provided in the last two years. Since 2014, more than 140 awards have supported federally recognized tribes and tribally chartered organizations have received funding to support tribal climate preparedness and resilience activities. The full list of awardees for 2014 and 2015 is available here.

The grant program assists tribes facing climate challenges. At the February 24, 2016, climate change listening session in Washington, D.C., for example, Interior officials heard tribal leaders describe some of the challenges their communities face.

"We heard stories from tribes across the nation facing numerous climate-related challenges, including food contamination and shortages, endangered ceremonial plants and threats to the land due to severe storm surges," said Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Economic Development Ann Marie Bledsoe Downes. "We also received several suggestions, such as comanagement in areas where tribes have hunting and fishing rights, youth engagement, housing efficiency standards and more tribal interaction and engagement with our Climate Science Centers."

Climate adaptation funding supports tribal climate adaptation planning, training and participation in technical workshops and forums. As an example, in 2015 the Karuk Tribe received funding to help assess vulnerabilities from increased fire intensity and severity.

Ocean and coastal management funds support coastal tribes in addressing the challenges of coastal erosion and development, rising sea levels, ocean acidification and emergency management. As an example, in 2015 the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon applied for and received funding to conduct a fisheries inventory and to assist with vulnerability assessment coordination and planning.

Youth funding supports tribal program internships that specifically address climate change adaptation with the tribal program, research internships in scientific settings in cooperation with the tribe requesting the funding, and youth engagement, either funding the climate related component of a larger youth program, or as a standalone climate-focused adaptation effort.

As part of Executive Order 13653 of November 1, 2013, all federal departments and agencies are expanding efforts to help tribes, states, cities, and localities prepare for the impacts of climate change. To comply with this Executive Order, the Secretary of the Interior's Tribal Climate Resilience Program is responding to the Recommendations and Supplemental Recommendations of the President's State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience and helping to implement President Obama's Climate Action Plan. A key part of the Climate Action Plan is to build more resilient communities and strengthen defenses for communities already on the front lines of a changing climate.

The President's proposed budget for FY 2017 includes an increase of $3 million to specifically address the changing Arctic landscape and offer support to Alaska Native Villages in evaluating options for the long-term resilience of their communities.

The Notice of Funding Availability contains submission deadlines and detailed information on funding categories and review criteria. Requests for applications can be sent to climate.funding@bia.gov or to the attention of Helen Riggs, Deputy Bureau Director, Office of Trust Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1849 C St., N.W., MS-4620-MIB, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, whose director is responsible for managing day-to-day operations through four offices – Indian Services, Justice Services, Trust Services and Field Operations. These offices directly administer or fund tribally based infrastructure, law enforcement, social services, tribal governance, natural and energy resources, and trust lands and resources management programs for the nation's federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages through 12 regional offices and 81 agencies.